

Siberian diary



Martin Krämer Liehn

Nº 4 darn



Martin Krämer Liehn. 2008.
Siberian Diary. (=Agitatorka
 № 4-darn). Warszawa, Pologne:
 Instytut Wydawniczy – kip, 48 p.
 ISBN 83-88353-94-2
 tirage: 2200

darn
 is Polish
 for jungle
 undergrowth

the editors are grateful to
 Damien Moran from Dublin
 for valuable comments on
 language and content and to
Stiftung Umverteilen (Berlin)
 contributing to our printing
 budget. d2

production cost: 6,- €
 any contribution, critique and
 suggestion of yours is highly
 welcome, please direct them to:
 Fundacja Książka i Prasa - kip
 ul. Twarda 60

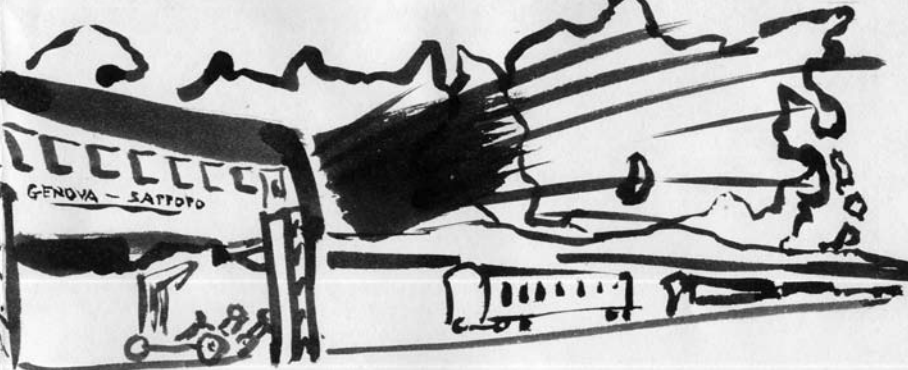
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 IBAN 44_1500_1777_1219_
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Step across the border – public-
 private partnership

Our train comes to a standstill.
 For three hours it isn't a train any
 more. Cut into bits, its wagons
 are being lifted up, one by one,
 and put on broader, trans-
 Siberian wheels. Once we have
 come back onto the ground,
 we are no longer limited to the
 narrow spaces of petty European
 railway communication. Looking
 at the dimensions westward, ex-
 Soviet citizens tend to call trains
 in coastal Europe "Električka",
 mere suburban commuter trains,
 no matter what express and
 speed titles are written above
 the price of their tickets. To the
 contrary, on our new broader
 wheels we could now move 8000
 km right to the Pacific coast in
 one go, i.e. in over 8 days and
 nights while spending some 80
 Euro on the ticket. In actual fact,
 we prefer to decelerate the thrill,
 seen as we have sort of taken
 7 years for the journey, similar to
 a caravan in the times of
 Marco Polo.

Why do I try to write
 this up for you? As every new-
 comer, going East I needed col-
 lective support. Luckily, I found
 it in most varied combinations.
 So, I would be happy to pass on
 at least some of it. Practically, I
 was never alone on this trip and
 thus I slowly learnt to feel less
 lonely than in the beginning. You
 will notice in the course of our
 voyage, that collective relations



tend to change. Interestingly, they sort of ripened from assimilating to interacting. There is a nice irony about seeking collective forms of travelling to new political horizons, new social combinations. Sometimes, the less complex the manner in which you set out the more you may succeed to socialise on the way. To my surprise in the end, almost every step eastward proved functional for the actual caravan of resistance we tried to build up against G8 in Sapporo 2008. But 7 years of preparation were obviously not enough to realise our dream: we failed to shake G8 sufficiently to shut it down. Within our failure, there were some modest shades of achievement, though. We traversed the newly recreated 3rd world of the former Soviet Union in its full length. We did so with open eyes. We continue to meet, discuss and converse with its precious social movement: rebellious railway and oil workers, students repulsing the local norms of docility, politicising crunch musicians, food-not-bombs-volunteers, independent trade union militants, writers not writing, painters thrown out of their workplace by political police.

This once important part of the world has been reshaped as a virtual homeland of failure. The incredibly energy consuming accuracy to supply Vladivostok with Spanish groceries and the Bajkal region with German

nuclear waste is an integral part of this failure. On our combined journey down this drain, we increasingly adapted to local modes of informal production, coming to terms with the current hype for downsizing joint action. So, we can tell the story of our voyage east as if it were mere individual travelling: limited possibilities plus naive hopes. That's what we are: People like you probably. Neither politically gifted nor materially privileged above the lower average. Dissatisfied with our past modesty, let's seek the way up and out of the drain then. Welcome to 10,000 railway kilometres, from fragmentation to Japan.

Uniforms and military ranks fill the corridors of our transformed train. Officers dressed-up opera-like start their dealings with the ordinary folk. Their uniform cites inventions of the stranded social revolution of 1917, which mobilised avant-garde artists to design a completely new appearance for delegates of people's power. Today though, the playfulness of ex-Soviet police apparel is poor disguise. They hand out migration cards to be filled in with compulsion. The reality of Ukrainian policing is in strict conformity to Schengen guidelines and interests, underpinned with jailing, taming, forceful conditioning. Migration cards are to police the movement of people. "You must always carry it with you. Lose it and you will



have a big problem," the inappropriately uniformed agents warn us. In Ukrainian everyday-life, non-European-looking students are being stopped and interviewed by policemen many times a day, under the pretext of controlling just this piece of paper. Uzbek political refugees have disappeared along with their migration files in the mills of Ukrainian political policing.

Noticing what is written on the back side of these police hand-outs, I suddenly feel an additional sting. It actually features a particularly aggressive class-sist commercial advertisement to the benefit of a private cell phone company. "Live on the bright side!" it orders, implying a threat: do not dare to mess with the dark side! There is a decisively authoritarian note to this consumerist rationale: if you dispose of the purchase power to join their network you are even entitled to feel welcome. The two sides of the surveillance form express a joint interest vested in a newly privatised and nonetheless old-style authoritarian state. Communicating towards its subordinated public, it establishes the norm to segregate, adapt and form the human landscape of possibilities and desires. With an awkward sense of horror rising inside, I risk an uncensored remark to the officer who will decide whether to let me into the country or refuse entry: "This looks as if the state you are serv-

ing had been taken over openly now by corporate interest." The border police officer exchanges a close glance with his colleague working next to him and responds in a surprisingly low and familiar tone: "Dumaeš čto nam ne strašny? (*yes, we are horrified ourselves*)" Looking into the eyes of my fellow-passengers, I feel something like a revolutionary spark between us. Our social understanding and experience is likely to differ greatly, but in this situation we seem to sense that we could take action together. You could call it a spontaneous conversion of class interest. We are used to being divided into uniformed and non-uniformed, salaried and free-lancers, sedentary and nomadic proletariat. But imagine to undo division among a crowd in a public place. You can do away with a whole system of life-long coercion.

Old Icons - new fast-food - high quality poison

A Ukrainian country fair is a colourful chaos. Elder people dress in gay colours. For most, there are only tiny sums to be spent. Winter and the monetarised health system pose a permanent threat to the feeble private economies of the majority class. Plastic goods are floating on the shallow and subdued tide of its demand. Horse-drawn carts wait to carry home the modest results of a day out shopping.



Where publicly exposed, the registration files for market places reveal, that the owners of stalls are generally not the ones who do the tedious work of selling. After some initial confusion in late Soviet trading, class division has taken a firm grip on petty vending activity, keeping people so restlessly busy in the land- and city-scapes of forceful de-industrialisation.

In a number of central stalls, we can buy an evoking combination of merchandise: icons and junk-food lie side by side with colourful packages of pesticides manufactured by Bayer, Germany, to poison small-holder gardens and possibly their gardeners alongside. Agronomically speaking, the value for money of these pesticides is at best as neutral as that of the icons on sale.

In 2008, German industry sold more successfully in the former Soviet Union than in China. This is the consecutive chapter of a long story amalgamating oppression and desire. A quarter century ago, the German Chemical trust Bayer resumed business in the Soviet Union, a source of profit which had been developed with special attention already in the years 1941-1944. In 1984, Glasnost (transparency, democratic Socialism) had not yet been heard of but arrangements for the sell-out of a still nominally public economy (later labelled Perestroika - refurbish-

ing) were already in full swing. "Strange," said a German industrialist when we happened to sit next to each other on an odd occasion. Ironically, I was to be helplessly over-dressed that day while he was dressed-down. But something different appeared strange enough to him in that moment to think loudly: "our machines for building roads always sell best in zones of war. Now it is Sudan and Israel, and Russia, Belarus, Ukraine. There is a specific buying culture in Russia and Ukraine, though."

I noted with rising interest that he was using the word "culture" in its real contemporary significance, without any reference to outdated academic disguise. He said culture and meant something specifically functional built on top of the arrangements of a ruling class. "When I get an order from Ukraine or Russia, I am automatically expected to increase the paper value of what we sell by about 30% above the sum I actually get. In the beginning, I was a bit uneasy how to explain this operation to the German tax authorities. Look, I sold machines for €4 Million on paper and received only €3 million in reality – a fabulous price nonetheless."

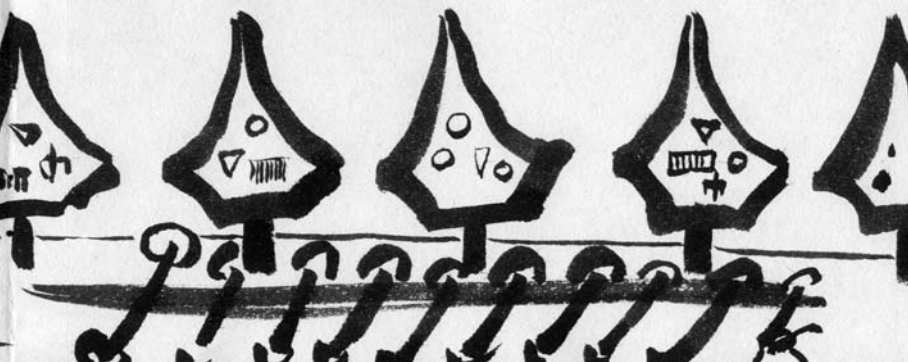
What he called "operation" would be legitimately called theft and extortion when committed by someone of a lower rank of class. Actually, public



funds in Russia or Ukraine really paid €4 million on road building in this case, with €1 million net going into private power networking. Sure, the corporate agent entitled to give out orders, gets his share. But the German industrialist probably realises extra-profits superior to everybody else involved in these machinations. "Formally, i.e. in the paper work, we have a problem. There was a million but it has disappeared. Initially, I thought this might somehow preoccupy our tax control authorities back in Germany. I confessed to them, but they made me shut up in an astonishingly business-like way. When I insisted, they counselled plainly: 'Just ensure you get some fake receipts for the sums which go into corruption. Your business partners in the recipient country will give you corresponding bills on demand, e.g. for exclusive Russian resorts. To tell you the truth, we prefer not to inquire into such paperwork.' It takes so much care and mutual understanding to perpetuate our export success story, believe me," he concluded musingly. "Only note, that I have never been asked to fake an increased price for transactions with Belarus." Dealing with different war zones, I learnt that day, corporate interest needs to differentiate the aggressiveness of its moneyed impact. Bourgeois coercion needs most refined delicacy and discretion to remain sustainable over a longer period

of time. Only disciplined class education and strict behavioural conditioning can guarantee such interests to multiply smoothly. Colonial impact has to devastate the ground it targets in a complex manner. If it can raise the appropriate collaboration from class contradictions among the colonised, it will perpetuate the needs and desires fuelling its success story. Ironically, the manners of the real profiteers appear convincingly smart. The colonising role model always seems somehow more sophisticated and tactful than those of their local contractors doing the dirty work.

"What country are you from?" is the most frequent asked question when moving eastwards. If you answer nicely, just attributing a mere nationality to yourself, the one who has initially shown such interest in your personal matters will be astonishingly satisfied and rather likely to turn away. Bathing in the sets of pre-conceived stereotypes about status and social hierarchy in Europe can keep you sufficiently busy with your own sort. There seems to be the strange assumption that there is only a ruling class in the countries westwards of our ever-stronger economic iron curtain. In fact, this class could not rule any more if it had not enforced disenfranchised zones, privatised workers' careers and public sell-out in and around its



very metropolitan profit centres. What was once characteristic of the third world is now incorporated into the most affluent dominion settlement. Affluence is not a matter of nationality but a matter of class. The ruling class is organised internationally. The disenfranchised have their consciousness tied to superficial passport racism. How can we provoke to add a realist note to the rattling of old ideas in their precious minds? After all, dividing people according to nationality is functional only with a necessity to preserve existing power relations. Quite astonishingly, a rather pale, evasive answer to the question about our nationality hardly ever fails to do the trick. When somebody insists on inquiring which country you come from just reply that you do not stress nationality issues ("ne ljublju podčerkivat' nacjonalnosti"). In reaction to this sly evasion, you usually get the most varied responses and precious hints on how to turn the conversation on its head. With these hints at hand, you can set out to ask about the social background and experience of your counterpart.

Counterpart
in between danger zones

A new passenger approaches my face as I wake up. With a feeble voice he asks me for water. The colour of his skin is dyed with blood washed away superficially.

A deep cut is roughly sawn with recent stitches. Their traces in his skin look likely to stay with him for a lifetime. "Water," he repeats feebly and explains himself with a ringing rural accent, "I need to drink something."

There are just too many elements in this scene I cannot understand. Every Soviet-built railway wagon has the facilities to provide running drinking water and boiling water in a samovar. These samovars have not cooled down for more than a century now, except for the Baltic zone where the eastern intercontinental standard of railway culture was literally crashed by EU strategy. However, EU expansion is prepared for Ukraine as well. The two accompanying staff designated for our wagon alone wear blistering Polyester uniforms officially decorated with Ukrainian nationalist symbols, reminiscent rather of Christmas tree decorations as a Russian saying goes. When I ask them about our new passenger, they have hardly more but a posh smile for him. He is obviously not fitting into the class model drilled into their professional expectations. Drill is a double-edged sword in this case. It is supervised by old-style, notoriously drunk Ukrainian train commanders in uniforms that brings to mind that of military commanders. They actually enforce the ongoing so-called "Evro-remont (Euro-



refurbishing)" of railway traffic. Though still about 10 times less expensive than Western railway, price policy already manages to neatly exclude most countryside dwellers living along the line.

Whose railways?

It was poor country folk on the verge of starvation who built Russian Imperial railway lines in the 19th century. Then and now the fruit of their labour, the most comprehensive intercontinental railway system on earth, is kept rather out of reach for them with pseudo-Western eloquence: "InterCity", "firmeny (corporate)", express train supplement, new posh rules on luggage. Such expropriation across the class divide runs from Belarus through Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan alike. "You have to buy a plastic bottle of water for him," the staff let me know, and with a quick sense of promoting their petty sales interest they encourage me "Go ahead! He has had a pretty bad time." Returning to him with three tiny plastic bottles, I cannot stop to wonder: they know his story and would not open their drinking water tap for a moment. Given their own miserable wages, they would never come across the idea of making tea with water bottled at the price of a CocaCola label. In return for my pathetically petty act of solidarity I got 5 hours of life stories. While I had still been

sleeping everyone around was already expecting and calculating the cost of my bargain. Only I had definitely not dreamt about such breathtaking eloquence. To my amazement, his story turned out still worse than it looked like at first glance. The raw flesh underneath his face showed up in between the fresh stitches. As the morning broke, my fellow-traveller watched out of the window over uncultivated fields stretching to the horizon for hours and hours.

With incomprehensible good humour Andrej, 35 years old, was considering himself a rather lucky one. He went through his memories of rural school classmates and we established that half of them had actually died already, the other half did much to follow them afoot, adding heavy drinking, related car accidents, unsafe sex to a the consequences of a disastrous wage situation. There seems to be only one way out: to join the army of illegal workers for EU hotel cellars, industrial greenhouses and domestic servant exploitation. This means surrendering your fate to intermediaries who handle your illegality on the western labour market extorting horrendous sums. Otherwise, you face the rather cashless economy of refeudalising poverty at home. Andrej, to the contrary, has hit the big time in recent years. He has been hired to do clean-up work at the



Černobyl nuclear reactor - not stable work, but guaranteed short-term contracts. They pay for some of the future health consequences now. This has created a rather unheard of cash inflow for Andrej, compared with other occupations by fellow-villagers. After some time, I start to understand Andrej's taste for lyrical passages in his accounts. When their workmen train approaches the death zone, wild animals would expose the peace of men's prolonged absence and lie for hours on the rails halting the train. Nobody bothers to shift them untimely. Instead, the employees halted on their way to work, would develop an observational muse only attained maybe by affluent Europeans in once untouched Polynesia. There is a rationale to this renewed interest as well. Why increase the hours of exposure to radiation in the hottest zone when they are paid for the day shift and find something to do on the way there? As many people from a modest background, Andrej freely shares all the paper documents he has on him. I read closely and tie my questions to what I can see with my own eyes, considering this the best help I can give for somebody telling a story. To encourage for a most realist mode of memorising prevents our counterpart from having to knit meta-layers of one-sided hermeneutics.

According to his papers, the

radiation dosimeter attached to Andrej on duty has noted an exposure above all limits of workplace safety. That is why he had to leave contract work around Černobyl. He was paid for the last time and sent home. At the railway station, he bought a cup of tea and waited for it to cool down a bit. In that very instant, he was bashed up badly and his entire money got stolen. At this point of his story, Andrej's remarkable talent for lyrical undertones within realist understatement reaches full volume. He describes his glances after the assault, fixing the plastic cup with tea still too hot to drink. "No, menja uže bylo ne do čaja (But I wasn't feeling like having tea any more, really)." As he had no cash on him, first aid at the station was quick to push him into the next train homewards. He left us at a derelict little station amidst industrial ruins and desolate wasteland. I watched him stumble over the adjacent rails into the frosty morning with some 2 hours to walk until reaching the wooden hut of his mother. Would she share his optimism when seeing his face cut in two, his radioactive exposure putting him out of the job he had been doing during the last years and his final pay lost on having a hurried plastic cup of tea? He turned round to wave me good-bye. Yes, he considered himself a lucky one in comparison with what went on in his village. I had learnt enough



from him to believe in his realism.

Fall out

Our train approaches another border, the one between Ukraine and Belarus. No need to take it apart again, physically at least. The rails are just Soviet size here and there, the unofficial talk just as Russian. But we were to stay put for some three hours again. Among the crowd in the large collective wagon, which allows 60 people to sleep, eat and sing at the same time, there was a palpable resentment against this show of uniforms and control in the middle of nowhere. Our train stood still in between swamps with tiny painted wooden huts here and there. We had made a big circle around the zone of Černobyl, once an important railway crossing. In the beginning of the 1990s, while many were dreaming to unify with the rich and powerful of the world, new state borders were drawn up in between the besieged cosmo-political entities of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Slight nuances in language among certain parts of the population (in the Baltic region and Eastern Ukraine a clear minority) served as a truly monstrous pretext to hijack public goods under nationalist flags dug out from the 19th century and underpinned with undisguised racist tones. Self-made

diplomats understood the link between enclosure and primordial accumulation. They reproduced what had been going on socially: the fragmentation of one whole society into privileged and disenfranchised clientele. The latter thankfully clustered in panic for the sake of immediate survival. Classism thus became obnoxiously offensive in all relevant social relations. Since then, Belarus has had to spend about 12 % of its annual budget every year to cope with the consequences of the nuclear disaster in 1986. The origin of radiation being located in newly invented national Ukraine and supplying mainly its ready-made capital Kiev.

The Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano convincingly described the outflow of wealth from Latin America in the 20th century, amounting to about 5 %, as a neo-colonial situation. In a polarised class society, 12% loss of purchase power can be the source of extreme and widespread poverty. Belarus is more heavily burdened than all its neighbours. Its economy is slightly different though. According to OECD data, Belarus's socio-economic indicators are less bad than those of Poland if you care to take into account the vast strata of people without paid work in the eastern periphery of the EU (most statistics do not). Highlighting differences between various degrees of



neo-liberalism can be deceptive if you are searching for a real system alternative. But even slight nuances can illustrate the contradictions of a process which would be extremely interesting to inverse.

I found an unexpected key to understanding Belarus during a sleepless night in a Krasnojarsk artist's studio, right in the mountainous heart of Siberia. A company of failed careers was drinking and making music just where I was expected to sleep. Long after midnight, a resolute woman with a slight Belarusian accent, started to recall her youth: "In the late Soviet Union, I found a place in a giant network, systematically robbing industrial production sites. We specialised in stealing broadly and complexly. We were integrated with a strict hierarchy and obeyed a minute division of labour. We operated in all Soviet Republics. You could call us an all-Soviet corporation for quick cash and long-lasting devastation. This worked fabulously, there were prominent figures up in society protecting us and profiting from our work immensely. Strangely, our method would not work in Belarus, though. I myself was recruited in Belarus, but we could simply not operate there as elsewhere. No way." And she laughed with disbelief: "Imagine, people would even denounce us to their superiors once we had started at a place". Strangely

enough, these superiors were not entirely occupied with securing their own share in the theft. Maybe, this low-profile exception in the Soviet Union breakdown was only possible because simple workers felt confident enough to demand loudly that their share of common goods remained common.

workplace defence - workplace leisure

When the commanding staff of a Minsk furniture factory disappeared from the site and the payment of wages alongside, self-management replaced them smoothly. Some energetic accountant secretaries would facilitate a just distribution of cash available, paying according to what was agreed to be needed by everyone. Workers with many children got more, others less. Wage-based hierarchy in the workplace had ceased to exist. Unfortunately for Belrus, in most cases superiors had no need to disappear.

In a Brest oven factory, situated at the very border with the European Union, manufacturing responds to orders from the whole of the former Soviet Union now. Sales are thriving. A young anarchist from the corresponding Brest working class background illustrates the working contradictions of the Belarussian model enigmatically. In certain departments where work itself



is heavy, the workload tends to allow for several hours of playing cards each day. Job satisfaction thus bears traits unknown to the western model. Alongside, he accounts that "officialdom in the factory couldn't be worse (načalstvo ne možna huže)."

Cycling through the countryside from collective farm to collective farm you will notice that the differences between autocratic farm directors and outright private loot of common means of production are fluent. Rural economy has similar tendencies to become derelict as in Ukraine and Russia.

After all, it is one world market pressuring all. Recently, Belarus has followed the Chinese turn of the 1980s in educational policies and introduced student fees as a step to turn the right for education into a right to buy and bargain educational products. There is an authoritarian deal at the basis of Belarussian conservatism. The unique preservation of Soviet public culture is only one element to this deal. Orthodox religious loyalties provide another. Most striking is the commercial key note intrinsic to all of them. Take the experience of the anti-authoritarian band "contra la contra" as an example. Usually, after some minutes of playing in a popular club, the power supply is turned off at the command of the political police. When they play in exclusive clubs for the new upper class

strata of oligarchs where the entrance fee is calculated on a dollar base, they can play undisturbed throughout the night.

Fishbowls of opposition

In Minsk preparations against G8 swim smoothly under the surface of police intervention like fish in icy water. We had to call a number and got to know our meeting place at the last moment. We then went through some micro-reshuffling in time, space and mountains of snow. We enjoyed the clear February sun glistening between the rests of the old Baroque provincial capital. All of a sudden we were in the middle of an ancient library in a splendid manor house. The library was closed to the public that day and open for anti-capitalist activists to meet. The employees at the entrance waved us through, saying that they would just obey orders and who happened to be their superior that day, a woman active in the movement against G8, would be responsible for all the consequences. Discussions then fostered a tendency to draw broad visions. How will life after capitalism look like? Maybe working in the last block-free country of Europe encourages to go for all at once. I was rather reminded of a traditional Belarussian music event around New Year called "Anarcho-jolka (Anarchist Christmas tree)"



drawing crowds of attendants from Kiev and Moscow. As in the reactionary German provinces in the time of Schubert, music in the former Soviet Union is a ready-made metaphor for free association. At the Minsk venue, political leaflets are being dealt out by Punk groups on the stage. During the 2006 event, a free oval space developed within the public, an effective fishbowl shared by many people around. With ever-changing contributions in the oval space dancers themselves create a second focus of attention among themselves counter to stage action. Building a world theatre of anti-capitalist visions in a squatted library, making a politicised stage superfluous and taking part in global action seem to be linked intrinsically. No doubt, we saw many of the attendants in hot-spots of anti-G8 action later, on the street in spite of heavy policing, before the jails in prisoner support. On global action day 2008, collectives back in Minsk mount the most spectacular support for Japanese activists along the trans-Siberian line. But we do not know anything about that yet and push to move on to Japan.

Our hosts have not been at the anti-G8 meeting. They are sufficiently busy with making semi-professional films and magazines. Their work is badly needed. There are just too many dreary moments living in a

commercialising dictatorship. They make a just living from the peculiarity that in Belarussia this dictatorship is looking rather old-style, which makes it attractive to western foundations to invest money in counter-culture. Diverting this money to anti-commercialist aims is a full-time-job. Whether the young urban professionals involved in such productions will contribute to the movement against G8 rule is an open question. Sociologically speaking, in the 1990s such groups performed crucial tasks for the corporate take-over in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia. In Georgia, Serbia and Ukraine a decade later, most of them stood apart. Maybe quite unexpectedly, the future western take-over planned for Belarus, Vietnam, North Korea, China and Cuba might witness them as their enemies? We leave Belarus, following the weekly shifts of these sympathetic cultural tight-rope walkers. They sustain their professional liberty exchanging one ex-Soviet metropolis for another, linking life in Minsk closely with developments in Moscow and Petersburg. But on the last night at the collective flat, suddenly a third group of rebels takes full stage in the tiny kitchen. Political and cultural activists have long gone to sleep. More delicate human faculties, undisturbed by demonstrative pragmatism and freelance funding management are now free to express their observations.



Somehow, the utterances of these underdogs within the Belarussian opposition movement, blurred by heart-breaking regular alcohol abuse have remained most vividly in my mind. There is a story about the past, one about the present and one about the future of the Belarussian development. We have forgotten so much on our way, we could not forget these three.

A story about the past of Belarus

"My grandfather travelled to Eastern Germany after we had won the war. He came from a very modest rural background and was anxious to prove his cultural sophistication when first meeting German comrades, building a Socialist state on the ruins of what had been the ultimate nightmare for Belarus. One of four citizens had been murdered by German occupants from 1941-44, the highest death-toll of all occupied countries in Europe. Stepping out of the train in East Berlin, he shook hands with the welcoming delegation and politely said 'Ausweis (your passport)!'. After World War II he was positively convinced that this must be the German way of saying "hello" to each other, as he had never in his life met a German who bothered to address him differently."

A story about the present

This is a lengthy story. It was told to us over several hours. To recall it in detail would mean to disclose someone who has no reserve to disclose herself among friends. She has a genuine talent of being frank to friends when things matter. This makes it unnecessary to recall any detail here. A long time ago, she committed the error of accepting a contact from the political police. Many years of inner painful questioning followed. What details has she betrayed, in spite of all her caution? How might her words have related to the persecution and jail terms of friends? Did she lose her place at university because of co-operating only half-heartedly? Did she regain it because of her learning efforts or by vesting new hopes in her contact officers? Political policing is advanced into oppositional circles with a tricky viral intimacy. Like political activism itself, policing of activism is likely to amalgamate with professional plans and ambitions, use mixed motivations in friendship and foster the gains of unequal exchange among circles celebrating free association as a means of parachuting ourselves collectively into future society.

A crucial lesson for landing in the future

We had already left the kitchen to walk out into the grey morn-



ing snow. As we dressed to step into the cold, one of us started talking about a coat attributed to either super, spider or bat-man. Selling in the United States, the manufacturer is obliged to put a most necessary warning notice on the item. It reads: "This product does not enable you to fly."

Russian portraits

No border check this time. Russia and Belarus are one area for policing. Both profit from the same Siberian oil-stream - with the slight nuance that Belarus has improved its refining facilities and is a preferred transit for western buyers whereas in Russia inner company corruption diverting investment funds has lead to out-dated facilities. Anyway, there are roughly \$US 400 billion of annual oil profits for a very limited number of years to come. The Russian social break-down, alongside a thriving domestic fossil fuel economy, has created modes of revenue repartition which look like enigmas of absurdity at first glance. Only one third of oil income is redistributed publicly by the Russian state. This is by far one of the lowest rates world-wide. African states like Gabon control at least two thirds of their oil revenues, Norway about 90 %. Surely, state control is no guarantee against private neoliberal take-overs. However, unlimited

corporate control is indeed the ultimate neoliberal nightmare.

The streets of Petersburg are collapsing under their load of cars. The highest energy consuming luxury vehicles are rather reminiscent of privately run tanks. One tramway line after the other is asphalted over to liberate further space for traffic jams. Some traffic congestions extending over the whole of inner Moscow only dissolve into movement again around 3 o'clock at night. "I have got stuck in a traffic jam" has become the most convenient excuse for not appearing at an appointment. You can hear this sentence after waiting for someone for three or four hours. There is something uncannily plausible to such a pretext. Taking the metro and walking around the private tanks parked across the pavements, you could do most distances within less than two hours. Metro wagons are still full of reading folk. Even the flood of advertisements around them is laid out for reading eyes. A society hooked on to the automobile trap some 70 years later than the United States is not apt to forget as quickly that there are other speeds and another possibility of convenience to human body and mind.

what keeps Leningrad alive?

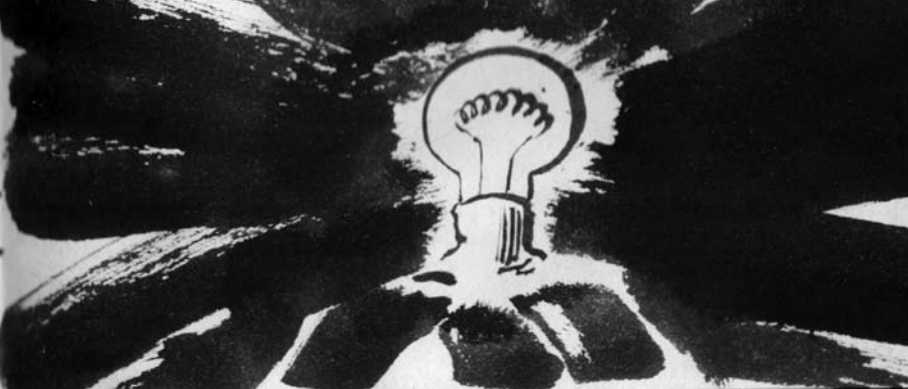
We sit in a large circle in one of the oldest parts of Petersburg.



In the middle lies a map with the rail and seaway to Japan. Many different contexts of oppositional work have come together. They combine with abilities making foreign guests marvel. Activists of avant-garde urbanism have learnt to target investors' attacks on life in the city. There are about a hundred hot-spots of neighbourhoods resisting the commercial remodelling of their town. Others support independent organisation at the workplace. One of them takes the initiative to visualise the discussion process on a flow-chart. Besides schooling for activists, inspired by Western experience, they have built up their own expertise in supporting working class struggles. Some local developments they supported acquired nation-wide importance. Their most striking mobilisations have been originated by Petersburg dockers and lately by extensive industrial action in the Ford car manufacturing plants. Alongside and partly intermingling, there is a veritable Anarchist subculture, splitting into different shadings, partly acting in unison with the Russian offspring of a US-pressure group for the empowerment of HIV positive people. Nobody in the round felt offended when their town got called Leningrad in the heat of discussion. This is rather not because of Lenin but because of the heritage of surviving and winning the blockade in World War II.

Here, in the meantime, our shared aim was to reach Japan by summer 2008. Some 250 activists had registered for this plan. We were anxious to organise responsibility as decentralised as possible, moving to Japan in affinity groups on flexible paths. Nevertheless, the quarter of a thousand activists interested in going and needing Japanese Visa should have practical interfaces at their disposal to link travelling groups and local activists on the way. We agreed on a separate communication structure to enable synergies for political interventions and for solidarity action against repression. Speaking about group synergies and conversion for action, the Leningrad meeting proved crucial for the following mobilisation. Interestingly enough, the activist scene of Moscow was by far not able to develop such an independent stance and an outspoken partisan position as the convergence at Leningrad. It formulated the guidelines for a trial caravan to Japan 4 months ahead of the planned mass movement.

On the basis of the common line we established in Leningrad, Russian and Japanese political police decided to exemplarily crack down on the trial caravan already. Interestingly enough, they succeeded in deterring sponsors and intimidating people interested in attending the



summer venue.

To get further east, let us focus on a fragment of the social potential involved in mobilisation. In the days of repression against the trial caravan, a young grandmother originating from Leningrad came up to the entrance of the Russian Federal parliament GosDuma in Moscow. She was let in by a critical assistant to a left representative in the pro-government block. She then helped to support the pressuring activities taken up in the Gosduma Bureau in favour of two caravan comrades taken into custody on the Pacific coast. We will ask her some questions, feeling that her answers in warm and concise proletarian Russian language can give us some clues about the landscapes behind the two Russian capitals.

-What do you think about our Leningrad meeting?

-Nice people. Everyone tried to contribute, help out. You feel at once that this is Piter [short for Leningrad]. I am like them. I was born there, you know.

-Would you go on a barricade with them?

-If it is really necessary, yes.

-How come you live and work in Moscow, then?

-I come from a working class family. We lived in the very centre of Leningrad. In the 1960s, we were 7 people and a cat together in one single room with 8 times that many neigh-

bours on the same corridor. My mother was stupid. She wanted a kitchen for herself and thus got married to an employee of the Interior Ministry in Moscow. She was a nurse first, then she became a railway worker. She drank herself to death all the while preserving a hilarious literary taste. She would call my step-father prison camp watch and herself after a character from Gogol's dead souls in a last pencil note on her cupboard. As for him she was right, that's what he was.

-And your biological father?

-Almost never saw him.

-Never wanted to see him?

-I did not think about that, really. He paid a monthly sum.

In Soviet times men would not be left to sneak out of that like nowadays. Funnily, this sum was just enough to pay for my piano lessons.

-Why would you not go on to study?

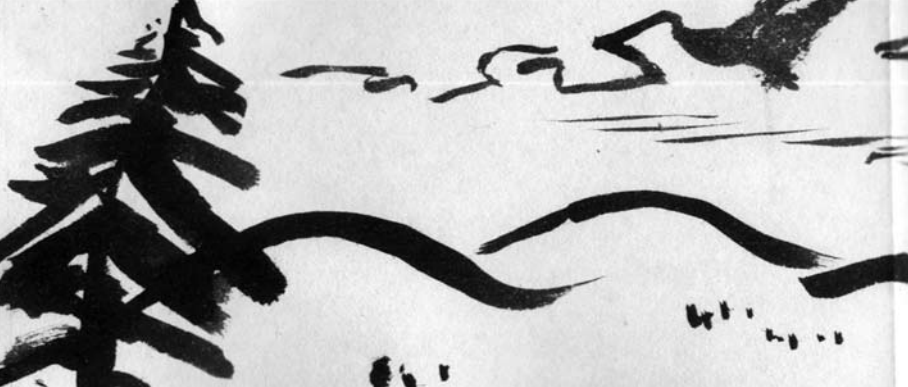
-I read a lot of poetry and literature and after school, I took up shift work at a rubber factory.

-You are not at home in Moscow?

-I can be at home everywhere where they let me grow some plants and look after animals.

-And your friends?

-I am living in a Komunalka again with separate groups in each room but sharing the same kitchen. You can hardly imagine how many people have gone through our flat during the last decade. I know most of the Russian indymedia activists, lots of



artists, people close to becoming destitute in our neighbourhood. I keep an eye on their children, help out if necessary.

-What did your grandmother tell you about the 1941-1944 blockade?

She lived with her three sisters and they managed to get to their factories every day, though there was hardly anything to eat. Their father was still alive then. He had been a respected worker, specialising as an electrician. He had been able to assist professionally in operating the Smolny 1917, a hot-spot of the city's October uprising. In 1942, when he felt he was dying under the nutritional regime of the blockade, his daughters urged him to tell them his parting wish. He said he wished to eat a rat. That week they caught one, and gave it all to him. He died soon after.

Russian winter landscapes

Some features of public life were kept up against all odds with a stunning persistence. In the kindergarten instruction was modern and lively. Children listened to music and danced. But weakened by chronic malnutrition, they died one after the other in the following months.

In the heavy winter frosts, it was not possible to bury people. Survivors were too weak to dig the frozen ground. Many dead lay frozen on the balcony. One sister worked in a lamp factory. Their

aim was to assemble an extra number of lamps to enlighten the premier of the blockade symphony by Šostakovič. She had an incredible will to survive and go on. All that power went into manufacturing lamps. She seriously poisoned her lungs as a result. After the war she died a most painful death of work-related suffocation, forced to sit upright night and day. To the contrary, her sister Man'ka blossomed after the war. You know, in Russia after the social revolution working class people developed affinity with the Arts, without the odd detour of bourgeois rules and obligatory social climbing. Man'ka left the factory and spent some time in studios. She started a romance with a Moscow artist. She had a true taste for the unconventional. Some claim that she later even had a love affair with the son of this relation.

-How much did you learn from the generation of your grandmother?

-Definitely more than from my mother. It is generally like that in Russia.

-Why did you go to work for a decade in Siberia a quarter century ago?

-Exactly to escape the power of respective grandmothers of the next generation on my children and my life. But note, that I went much further than Siberia. Siberia ends at Lake Bajkal. I went far more up to the North-East, actually quite close to Alaska. Initially, I wanted to help build



the Bajkal-Amur railway with my new husband. We came a bit late. So we went North to the Ice Sea shoreline. He learnt to be a shoemaker. I worked as a secretary and then as a cleaning woman, helped to look after the children of my friends. None of the Russians in our little town in the Polar night would ever think about shutting a door for others with a key.

Our hotspot settlement in the ice was called Mayday, Majskij. We celebrated Mayday within mountains of snow. It was an important day for us.

-You believed in a global victory of your class?

-Yes, we expected it. My best friend, Olga, even decided to change her studious husband into a manual worker. Manual work was respected and we considered it the basis for defining priorities in society. I did not see my choice to go to work in a rubber factory as something declassing my prospects to study, read, draw as much as I could. However, there was something uncanny in the way everything seemed to be predefined in Soviet life. *[She lies on a sofa after having played on the piano. Her eyes wander far above the roofs of Moscow into the vague grey. Automobile traffic is thundering through the window without a pause, night and day.]* Maybe all the Westernised promise of novelty we bought at such a high price boils down to cars, asphaltting our town and computers

asphaltting our dreams. But I remember being horrified by the prospect that late Brežnevian Soviet life would never bear the possibility of change being made by us. Imagine, we were so frightfully bored.

-In the Čehov vision being frightfully bored is a definite class privilege and, after all, this state borders uncannily with a possibility of happiness.

- Don't compare us with the long drawn-out death of Russian bourgeois culture. *[She laughs.]* We were out for the real assets to happiness. Our whole settlement up in the polar tundra was designed to find gold. Soviet dental care was sophisticated and afforded gold for everyone.

-Did you find any?

-Our pioneer township was closed by a central decision in 1991 before we could find something worth extracting. Ironically, many of us lost their teeth at a young age because of the tough temperatures and a rather poor diet. But losing our polar savings none of us can afford golden teeth now.

Remember how you winced when cutting the top off your fingertip this morning. Its a painful place to cut, I can tell you.

In the years after Eltsin pushed himself into power, we took any job we got. In the end, both my husband and I worked in little boxes on a Moscow railway station, selling fast-food and cutting bread at piece rates.



For years on end, I had to cut so much bread, that I could hardly help sawing off my fingertips several times a day in a row. The entrepreneurs supervising us, deciding on our equipment and yielding our revenues, would be rather concerned that our blood did not soak the bread we were to sell.

Eastbound

We leave Moscow eastwards. We pass Tatarstan. After some hesitation, we go astray. Leaving behind the trans-Siberian main line we change to smaller local trains into the depth of the proto-industrialised Central Ural. Mountains are lifting up and waving gently reminding of West Yorkshire. In the evening, our train stops. In the twilight, we rest at the very frontier between Europe and Asia. A large sawmill keeps on working throughout the night. The personnel of the train have cared to become friends with us on the last half day of our ride, so now we feel free to follow their invitation to the railway worker's collective house. Engineers socialise gayly with conductors and us. We get excellent food. For the night, we are taken back into the wagons standing idle in the train station. Train staff are more acquainted with heating their wagons than the rail worker's collective house. There is a distinct lack of provinciality in all

the questioning, joking, singing. It bears the winning charm of working-class cosmopolitanism. Maybe, we should put aside our pre-conceived stereotypes about Siberian wasteland and vodka-fed bumpkins. The precautions of the rail workers to put us up, feed us, and instruct us have proven reasonable. Asking around, wandering through hundreds of kilometres of once cultivated stretches in the endless range of mountains, searching for the inhabitants of the stout wooden houses peeling out of piles of snow for a short summer, we learn that people are alert, gifted with a swift intelligence, trained in centuries of home industry and world-market driven handicraft. Curiously, they invest it mainly in a broad sophisticated distrust. "Don't take them for misanthropes;" the rail workers took heed to cool down our possible resentment in advance. "Nearly every family here has a history of dissenting with Tsarist rule, with the orthodox church hierarchy. They draw from memories formed in centuries of resistance against an oppressive state, sending its tax collectors, thought police, and recruiting agents."

Yes, the comrades living and working in the railway arteries of this giant European periphery probably have it right, the human landscape and its proto-industrialised mountainous counterpart are rather reminiscent of the grade you traverse



from Leeds to Liverpool. The mountains have been a refuge for all kinds of dissenters, disbelievers, outcasts. In the course

of proto-industrialisation, their repressed abilities have industriously brought these back-waters into touch with the world-wide pace of change. Recall the abasing poverty of Lancashire weavers in the 19th century. The semi-industrial workers of the Ural are their comrades in arms, no matter how isolated they are lately, thrown upon their desolate wooden homesteads by world-market-driven deindustrialisation. In their faculties, accumulated within centuries of professional co-operation, they are brothers and sisters for building a world-wide economic continuum. In contrast to what capitalism managed to globalise, their historic vision of human development is not preconceived as making a living by pushing their colleagues on the opposite periphery into starvation.

So we enter Asia, having behind us a crucial task of preparatory



observation back in Europe. We have located all the prejudicial features about Asian relations of economic power within the European mainland itself. Colonising Asia in the 19th century, London itself became just the opium den, everyone affording education thought to see in the East. Ripping the last drops of Siberian fossil resources from the

subdued continent nowadays, the golden youth of Petersburg, Berlin and Moscow is much more reminiscent of Asian patriarchy than the Siberian oil worker. They work in extreme climatic conditions for some 500 US\$ a month. Against all odds and heavy policing, the main sources of the temporary Russian oil boom have brought up an independent trade union movement.



Where open industrial action is treated like outright rebellion, organised go-slow strikes and intelligent sabotage become the preferred means of advancing collective interest. The protest movement by oil workers of late 2006 in the basin east of the Ural has been channelled for the time being by a liberal trade-union leadership. International expertise is available for social management of the oil rush. In the regional capital Tjumen, major multinationals have furbished their operation headquarters. Unqualified work is out-sourced increasingly to privatised work-gangs, hired from abroad on short-term contracts.



The main Siberian sources of crude oil are in the Tjumen region East of the Ural: Surgut, Neftejugansk. Their pipelines reach the trans-Siberian railway



at the refineries of Omsk. In this strategic easel of Russia's short-living oil rush, an interest-



ing syndicalist movement has developed over the last decade.



Our friend works in the quality check of railway crude oil



wagons, carrying the greasy sludge East to China and West towards Belarus. For many



years, he had to enter and check these wagons, inhaling all the poisons permeating Western civilisation nowadays. Our friend is a working class rebel. There







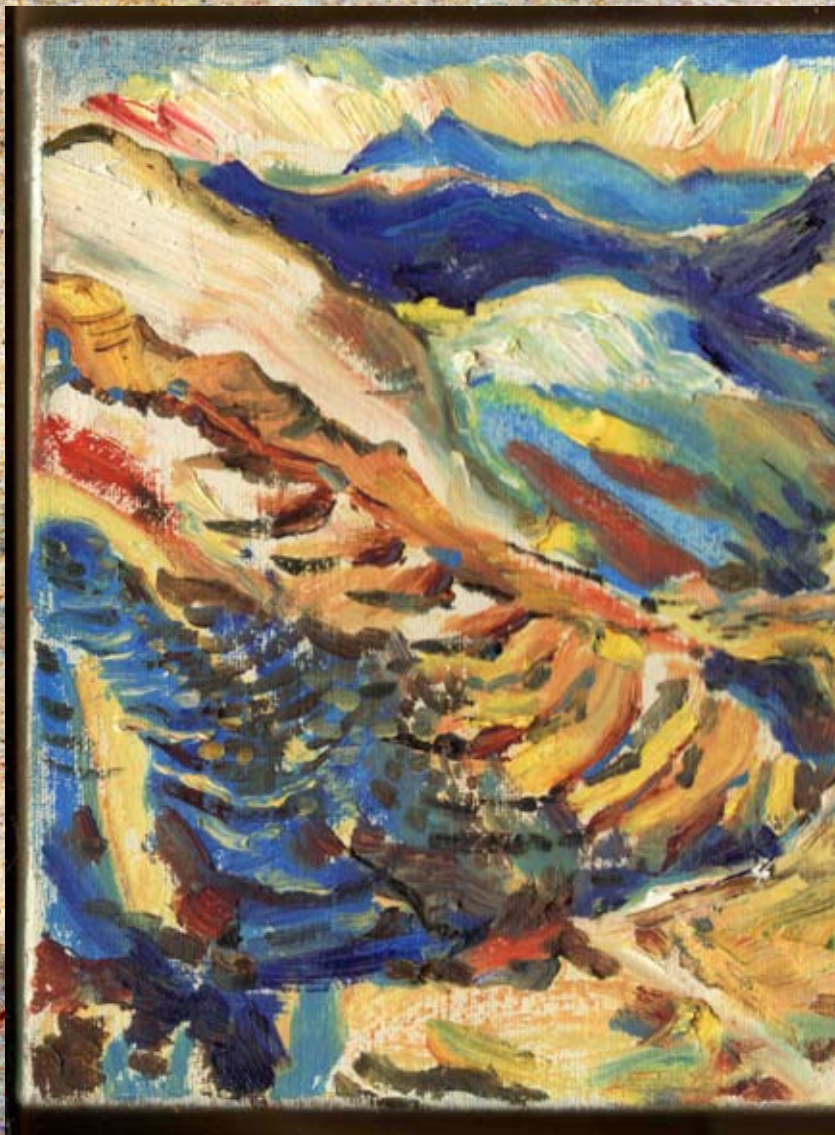


him" the political instructor of the industrial unit ordered his



have been serious attempts to fire him before his early retirement. His colleagues have stood behind him and endure the most remarkable assaults. "Get rid of

foreman. "How?"
"Get him drunk, then find him at work or don't find him."

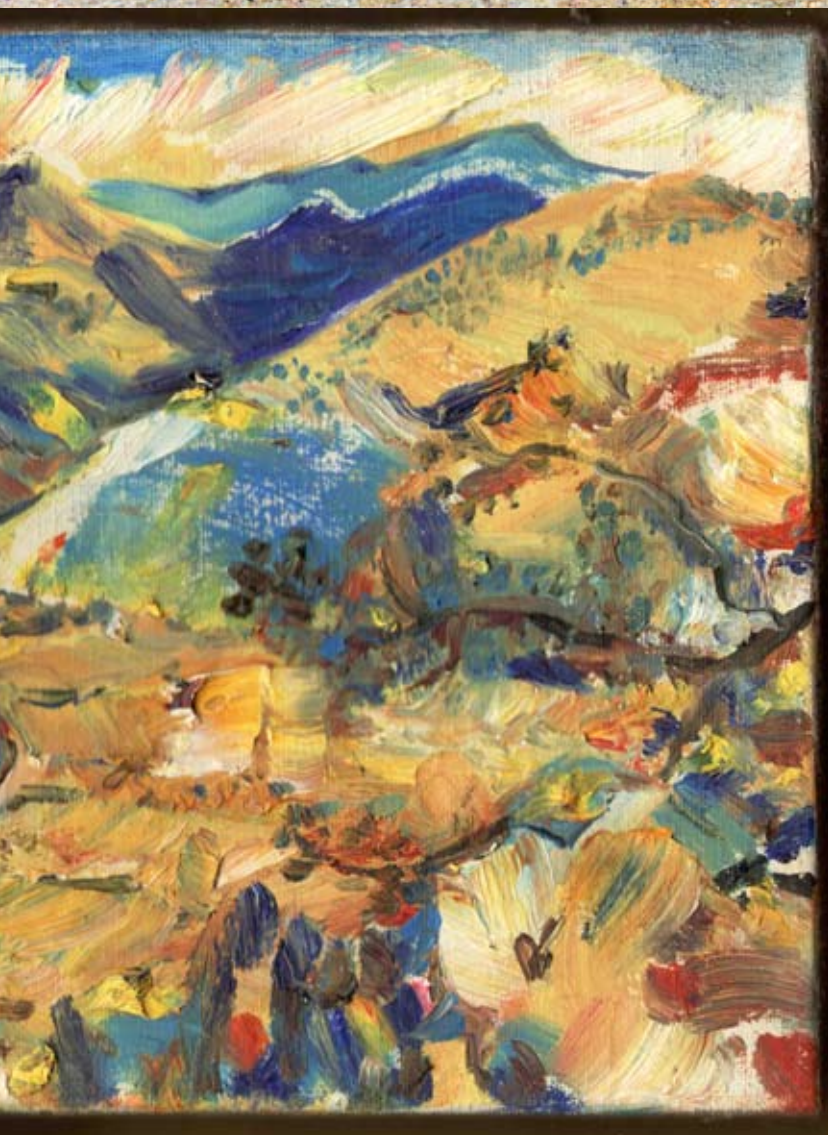


"Well, the problem is that we just cannot get him drunk when we need to." Besides mount-



ing resistance at his strategic workplace, he has joined two

social fights in the townscape of Omsk worthwhile sketching. Petty-gardening in the exceptional fertile land around Omsk and its vast oil refinery have swelled the urban space up to a



diameter of more than 60 kilometres. Busses approved by the town administration chronically fail to provide efficient public transport. (Wo)men-power being monetarily esteemed at a minimum anyway, little taxi vans with established itineraries have



taken over the task. They are operated on two principles and thus organised in two separate federations. The Federation, fostered and counselled by Omsk Anarcho-Sydicalists, admits no membership of taxi-owners letting others drive for them. This federation has shown a high level of initiative. Drivers associate and invent new lines just as spontaneously as urban needs happen to develop. They seem to know the dynamics of public demand much better than the town administration. And the fancy numbers they invent for their self-made lines and put up in the windows of their vans look pretty much the same as the officially approved connections. But on the extensive roads of Omsk, free association is the target of heavy police fining and systematic pressure. In a cleverly



masterminded attack in 2007, Omsk administration heeded protests and reintroduced price reductions for students and other poorer passengers. They remembered to compensate their business partners for the loss in income but not the self-organised free-lancers. It is hardly possible to imagine what it takes to close down traffic in the centre of a major Russian city nowadays, when any tiny assembly of people in the streets and public places which could have a political background is instantly targeted by police and dissolved under threat of immediate arrest. In Russia, police arrest has become a synonym for the possibility to be beaten up behind closed doors. Well, the Omsk federation of free-lance



taxi van drivers made it happen nonetheless. Our friend took special delight in the politeness of the police pledging helplessly to walk a little more to the left and right when one and a half thousand people blocked the streets of the centre. During the mobilisation against the G8 in Leningrad 2006, our friend was taken into custody for the reason of some modest internet mobilisation. Having reached a critical mass in the streets in the end, people learned that public servants can indeed be pressured to serve the community, a thrillingly new experience.

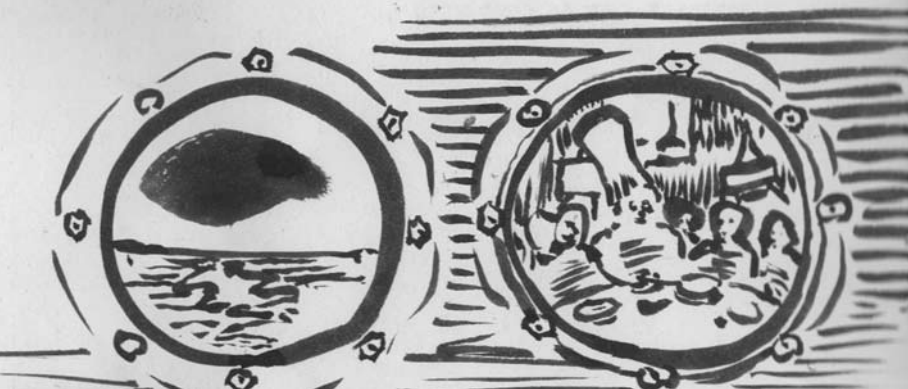
On another front, demands are more modest and existential. The ruling classes, imploding social guarantees to their private benefit, have reanimated the bondage of traditional patriarchal families to make up for the most striking social hardships. Yet, there are many adolescents who have no such family background. In a system which has monetarised and privatised the most reproductive functions of society, you can hardly get a suitable education or even a modest place to live in without drawing from family privilege. Those who do not happen to be privileged with a family background whatsoever simply fall off. When they take to the streets in Omsk, a small group of youngsters who have decided to stand up against their disenfranchisement, they are very likely to have amongst them our friend and his colleagues. Advice and support against police repression is crucial when you are just beginning to voice political demands and likely to lose your place to sleep when turning 18. When the dream of a joint caravan to Sapporo failed, I was most sorry that we had missed the opportunity to make Leningrad workers, Omsk street marchers and Vladivostok dockers meet for converging their experience in the East.

A capital to Soviet Siberia

Moving further east, we come to the condensed Early Soviet dream of a new Siberia: Novo-



sibirsk. Novosibirsk is a pearl of early Soviet constructivist architecture. In its widespread subcentres on both sides of the river, modern communal living and commune houses reflect the power of the working class movement in the 1920s. The pompously elect houses for engineers in the very centre are a later development, the Academic township Akademgorodok a snobbish fancy of the 1950s cold war industry. Novosibirsk is the only town of Asian Russia with more than a million inhabitants, a metro system and comprehensive university facilities. The Novosibirsk invention of "monstration" has added unheard of colour to the traditional Mayday de-monstration in the metropolis. It was initiated by a small group of political avant-garde artists and has since attracted entirely new subjects onto the political scene. There is a regular Gothic block, people discriminated against for their unconventional looks but rarely understanding their misfortune politically. In Novosibirsk they do and they have made others take to the streets. Some hold transparencies with a single-letter message: "ë". They are right to put this extremely helpful letter onto the red list of dying species within Russian writing. Pre- and post-revolutionary snobbism requires from readers to know by heart when to read "jo" and when to read "je". The ability to acquire such an essentially



unnecessary knowledge is a reliable indicator for class background (playing tricks on privileged foreigners is nice but insufficient to re-establish justice). Indeed, Russian public culture has done away with classism on an unprecedented scale in the course of the 20th century. Nowadays, rebuilding one of the most violent class societies on earth inevitably inflicts drawbacks on language. The premeditated extinction of "ë" is indeed highly political. In Novosibirsk it has made linguists and future public servants take to the streets.

Ennisej speed boat

Right in the heart of Siberia now, we want to measure its depth, explore its Northern and Southern limits. Our dream is to socialise with comrades on the Chinese border and folks on the shores of the icy ocean far behind the polar circle. Reaching the last major Siberian river system before the East Asian mountains, Enisej, we choose to move downstream first. After 4 days and nights in the boat down the river, moving as far as from Southampton to Iceland, we made out about three visible signs of human settlement on all the thousands of kilometres of river shoreline. The third and apparently last one was a cosy wooden hut in the wilderness. Two long-bearded men waved

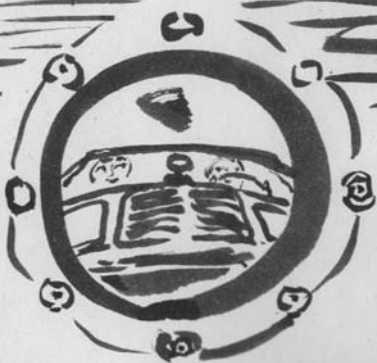
us hello in the meek and mild northern sun within thousands of kilometres of silence, chill and summer mosquitoes. They seemed quite happy in their patriarchal contentment. But we were in quest of traces for a slightly more modern social vision of life in the polar out-back. So we went further and further downstream until finally reaching the dream-like wooden metropolis of Igarki in the Enisej delta, just half way between Tibet and Canada, closer to the North Pole than any other continental mainland on earth.

We saw wooden commune houses, constructivist theatres, skyscrapers to help Zeppelins landing along the far northern shore of the ice ocean to Alaska on their return legs in the 1930's.

The organisers of these journeys were politically repressed at the end of the decade.

We saw a wave following us for six more days of boat travel back up the river Enisej.

We laughed merrily at ourselves looking at this wave day and night. It reminded us of this apparently silly Communist youth song rejoicing that Lenin will be forever young. Maybe our quick Western European laugh betrayed us as being too accustomed to living in narrow



dimensions. This wave seemed indeed forever young on some 3000 km.

We came across the site of a political murder in 2007. A courageous group of friends had mounted a camp against the G8-deal to dump Western radioactive waste at Angarsk in the Bajkal lake region. The Russian political police had menaced the camp, Western-sponsored NGOs had exploited its bravery to profile themselves as critical moderates. In the end, a bunch of skin-heads were released from a police station nearby. They bashed up the whole camp site and killed one activist. Jura, too, was so badly hit, that only collecting lots of activist donations for special medical treatment could save his life.

It was good that Jura joined our trial caravan to Japan in Habarovsk. He has come out of months of hospital treatment with an inspiring political maturity. His smile reminds me of our European comrade Martin Shaw who survived a Swiss police intervention making him fall from a bridge for the sake of a smooth G8 in 2003.

Both of them made the best they could of it. Not everyone can take blows as they did, but it is certainly thanks to their commitment that trauma-relief work has become an intrinsic part of left activism in some parts of Europe and Asia now.

We witnessed the shattered life of a close friend further up the Enisej at Krasnojarsk, once a well-known artist.

When he got funding to work in Paris, he engaged a cook to care for all the friends he invited to his study.

In Russia, he was kicked out of the Krasnojarsk society of artists, losing his workplace and being seriously beaten by political police. He had started a project to work on the hopes attached to the figure of Lenin. We would have loved to share with him our laughter watching the wave travel upstream both day and night.

He saw the wave, yes, but he would not understand our merry mood.

We do not know the one and only adequate reaction to repression, because repression eats up human life irretrievably. However, studying waves and the under-currents from different points of view seems an appropriate point of re-departure. We saw the Tibetan Buddhist region of Tuva further up the Enisej.

A century ago, a remarkable polarisation went through these former Chinese territories. The more Russian orthodox imperialism managed to colonise militarily, the more people in the Altaj



mountains, Tuva and the Chinese provinces East of lake Bajkal took refuge in declaring to be Buddhists.

Mongolian manuscripts

Tuva is a contemporary Russian colony with a non-Russian speaking majority. It is being ripped of its natural resources at the price of the highest mortality in the Federation.

We found hilarious scripts of ancient Mongol signs in its archives.

They warned about Russian settlers moving into this Chinese territory without asking. "We have to be good to our neighbours, though" one manuscript insisted: "Mind, they let us bring back a horse, which ran to their side of the mountains." After 4000 km on the river Enisej we had understood all of a sudden, that European settlement could come over Siberia only from as far North as the Ice Ocean. Settlers had to move up the Siberian riverbeds, the more south they came the more they hit upon civilisations not running away from them but changing them. Pushed by Civil War in 17th century Europe, Russian-speaking settlers carried their little boats from one riverbed to the next and thus made it to Kamčatka within only 30 years. It was much more tedious for them to move southwards. People there would not just evade the intruders like

the Nomads of the Far North. The southern settlements, starting in Turuhansk, just a little South of today's Igarka, were much stronger in many respects.

Maybe, this encounter with south-eastern neighbours was the genuine cradle of social faculties to learn and assimilate, astonishing the world in 1917 and some years to follow.

We happened to hit upon the protocols of a Buddhist-Communist conference from the year 1928. In brilliant short-hand conversation, progressive factions of both orientations decided to work together against the political economy of traditionalists and the remaining non-Communist interests in the world which they had heard of. Tuva being the second Socialist State of the world. It definitely went its own way in those years. Wandering monks knew Tibetan language, trans-Himalayan medicine, landscape and astronomy. Wandering communists knew what had changed in Moscow and what British Imperialism was up to in China. After drinking beer together, both decided in the very middle of Asia that it is better to form one single movement.

Wandering up to the sources of the little Enisej, some of us chanced getting a lift in a Mercedes limousine. The couple on the front seat was so nicely flirting in Tuvean language that we



decided they cannot be married. She got a phone-call from work, a Tuva minister calling. She hung up on him to ask how we would explain the term "sublimation".

Mainland China

We got another lift by a Chinese upper-class couple just on the other side of the Gobi desert, in the Himalayan Mountains, upon which Peking has started to unfortunately encroach. They are actually being scratched systematically from 2500 metre downwards to be grinded into grey concrete for capital construction. From the back-seat of the limousine we marvelled at the most dynamic disappearance of the third dimension being turned into explosions, lorry loads, dust and sludge. The hellish noise and confusion of this disintegration was evident over hours and hours of our high-speed hitchhike. Again, terribly important phone calls came in and more important flirting out of it: within the perimeter of Chinese culture, even the meanest business is carried out in marvellous human elegance.

Then, we plunged back into the stagnation of the Russian Far East. Every North Korean in our bus wore a bright red party sign making him and her forever young. On the roadsides we passed semi-drunk Russian racists still able to balance themselves on two feet for the sake of poking

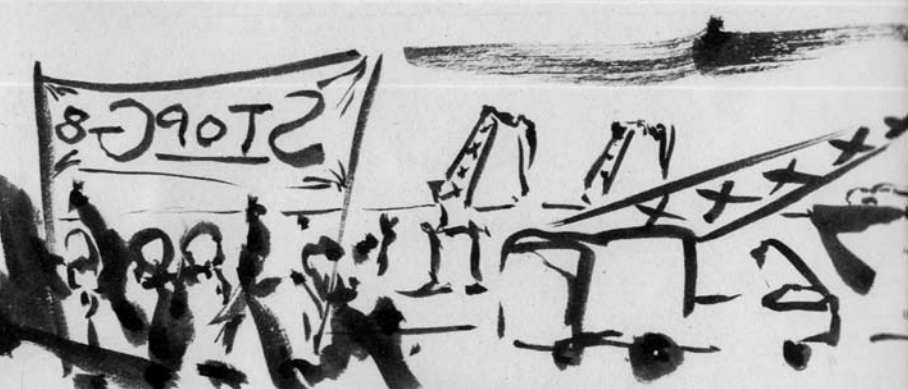
their fuck-finger against our bus.

We apologised to our fellow-travellers for sharing our own boring European-ness with those decaying soldiers still profiting from the anti-Chinese mount-up of the 19th century. The Chinese businessmen sitting next to us nodded politely and looked past us.

With Jura, we formed a veritable proto-caravan to Sahalin.

A sports activist came to our train. He had heard from friends of friends thousands of kilometres away that we were mobilising against the G8. "The Olympics is crypto-fascist bull-shit," he analysed in short-hand for us on the platform - continuing by explaining that "sports is just too nice for their money machine. Sport must be made accessible for everybody. We need to reinvent democratic sports, fight for it, make it possible everywhere."

A night's train-ride further up north, we met jolly comrades in a hole of several metres hit into the ice on the Amur river. "It's a pity you did not submerge your head in the water like we do," they said. "You people from hot regions have no idea about the important points of our body to be activated regularly in ice water." When we proposed to activate their anti-Capitalist sentiments, they instantly agreed to give their support for comrades passing



through to Japan. It was understood that there was a parallel police mobilisation against us. They would not hesitate. According to our impression, they need no further chilling from us in exchange.

It is quite spectacular how they manage to survive in Komso-molsk na Amure against the industrial break-down engineered in their 300,000 pioneer metropolis. With no cosmopolitan township further up to the North-East, the economy of the outer tundra moves closer into the city every year.

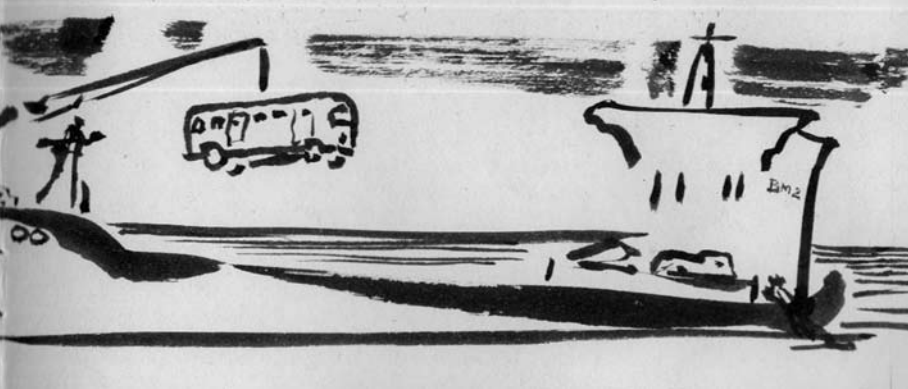
Eventually, though missing out on chilling our heads, we got to the Pacific coast in high spirits. Only hours after the last presidential election polls closed on 2nd March 2008 in distant Kaliningrad, our company was beaten up by a political police crack-down. Interestingly enough, their pretext for arrest after 8 hours searching is the fact that we carry the protocols of a Buddhist-communist conspiracy with us. What a pity that it dates 80 years back! Regardless of their pretext, they seem very preoccupied about the security of Japan all the time.

Maybe there is a feeble rule observed sometimes of not to hit for a second time someone already hit too badly. Anyway, Jura is being released. He goes to Sahalin to mount support against the searches and arrests.

On arriving at the island, he is instantly searched and arrested again. The police takes care to get a trophy photograph of the skin on his belly. It carries the signs of half a year of fighting for survival. Two times his intestines had to be taken out, cleaned and sewed in again after the abuse at Angarsk. There is a disgusting truth to the observation that the authors of an atrocity tend to return to the place of their crime.

a long Pacific winter night

I am alone under night arrest by the political police, FSB. I make no single movement to their favour. They have to carry me. They kick. I cry. Then, they get more cautious for possible witnesses. They announce they'll kill me if I do not talk, throw me out of the 4th storey. It will be an accident, they allude slyly. I do not talk. They carry me up four stories. It is a long night. There is something nauseatingly petty-bourgeois about this torture gang of the Russian political police. The shoes of the commander Malahov, kicking so fervently, are prepared elegantly and polished shiningly for the evening like those of a provincial beau going to a middle class disco. Clearly, they are a better sort in their own opinion. Later a journalist publishes a rarely open article in an official Russian newspaper. I sort of saw in her face, that she took the cour-



age to do so, when I drew her attention on the class issue in question. Mind, we concluded together, that these specialists of political policing get far superior salaries knowing much less about the global politics in question than she.

Phone-calls start coming in to pressure official police for an end to repression against our caravan. A comrade from the US sends police in the Pacific backwater of Vanino virtually to hell via telephone. Nice work! She has the voice to do that, I know. A comrade based in Vietnam informs French-speaking internauts. Even, some Members of Parliament in Moscow lend a glimpse of attention. The office of one of them turns into an effective base for support work within the following weeks as problems increase with additional Japanese political police repression.

The most important memories I retain from these weeks which changed my perspective on life are curiously contrasting. I remember the ideas forming in my dizzy head on the first morning after being thrown from a Russian political police jeep into the black snow together with my luggage after all the beating. Before realising that I should call an ambulance, there was a slight, sub-conscious astonishment that it becomes day again on this forlorn icy Pacific coast.

Looking closely at all the forms peeling out of the daylight, I thought, that it might make sense to found a political commune to facilitate more complex political, scientific and artistic work in the Russian Federation. I cannot tell how I came to think like that. Was it ultimately realist or utterly unrealistic? Frankly speaking, I have not been able to figure it out yet.

Thoughts became less complex later in the day. I decided to escape from hospital care with my torturers working so close by. Merging into the heart of a group of smugglers bringing goods from China to Sahalin, I skipped police control and made it onto the ferry to the island. How I enjoyed it breaking through metres of ice on the Pacific ocean! In the brilliant spring sun, every fragmented crystal colossus was shoved neatly on top of the seemingly endless white surface breaking it in under its gentle weight. Obviously, I was watching from very high above.

I started to enjoy every single human encounter with civilians. I listened with heightened attention to expressions of working-class people finding words expressing their interest in political change. Secretly, I started to love Russia with the poignant intuition that every hour now can be the very last in this splendid country. Against all odds,



I met Jura again and together we frolicked in the company of Sahalin's brilliant one and only anarchist. Planning with us to transit anti-G8 activists through the island on an unprecedented scale, he was backed up by a sly bunch of experienced former Communist party rebels, now highly professional human right lawyers, peace and anti-nuclear campaigners. Big multinational capital is permeating the island for gas and oil, just as intimately as the Russian political police worms it simultaneously for its very own and slightly more old-fashioned trust interests. There is no ecologist movement, no school festival, no open gathering surfacing to public attention without consent or interference from political police. They mingle, silence, bribe and intimidate in unison with US and Japanese capital. Their novel unity seems to reduce our agenda to one single fight.

I failed to reach the anti-G8 conference on the 15th of March. I was practically held hostage on a boat all the days before by Japanese police and deported just one day prior to it. On the 14th, we managed to draw up a splendid meeting behind the barbed wires of the commercial harbour to Sapporo. An activist played aboriginal Ainu music. A group of Japanese comrades managed to smuggle themselves on board of the deporta-

tion vessel to talk with me. We knew that every minute was precious. I handed over presents from the 25 affinity groups along the trans-Siberian railway preparing to go to Japan. Each of them was characteristic of a different group dynamic. And the Japanese collective was dynamic indeed, grasping the subtle nuances and its possible implications for future co-operation.

Musically speaking, on »la strada« for two decades, I have found exactly two people with whom I could improvise and invent in a perfectly shared naivety of unhampered inventiveness. The first lucky meeting was with the homeless Polish Jew Elias playing accordion in Paris 1991, and the second when I happened to play with the Neapolitan trombonist Sandro on the giant 1998 demonstration against NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. In a slightly uncanny way, this first encounter with a Japanese political collective was something like a third moment of bliss in my life. As you can imagine, from the outset we promised too much to each other.

After a sleepless night at sea, I hurried to put down the most important thoughts I could recall. Now, these look like decorations the morning after a fabulous fiesta. The guests are gone... but they have left some traces behind. I have been on the way East for 7 years, observ-



ing, planning, dreaming to come to Japan and in the end when it became clear that I simply could not reach our final aim it was a Japanese collective that came to converse with me instead. Could you imagine a more inspiring turning point to a journey around the globe? If yes, let me know. So, here is the dustbin turned over after the post-party clean-up: ashes, used-up lipstick, dirty coloured paper, to put it in a nutshell: a lovely mess!

deliver this letter
- the sooner the better

15.3.2008 – 6:00 Japanese time.
"I am on the boat now, softly rolling on the waves before the wonderful coastline of Ainu Mosir. I am very grateful for the friendship I have experienced over the past 5 days in Ainu country. I am happy about the support and solidarity from you. We know very well that to make solidarity live, be visible and effective, many of you sacrificed a lot: time, energy and resources needed otherwise for the build-up of a lively anti-G8 movement. So, the bourgeois media is quite mistaken to make heroes out of single individuals in our movement now. They will be equally mistaken to make devils out of our arrested comrades later. Our movement needs no heroes, no angels and no devils. It is our shared effort, a genuinely egalitarian and collective political

economy which mobilises now and will deal a strike to G8 capitalism in the near future. Bourgeois media cannot understand that. If they understood it, they would give up their false business and join our movement. Let us assist every single one of the mainstream professionals drawn into the process of deporting me back to Russia in taking this step, at least individually. To join us, they have to go against job loyalty and political repression inside their newspaper, their television channel, state repression. They need our support for rebelling now more than any Martin on a nice Russian boat, though it is not nice to be carried away from the very place where you want to live, work and make friends for the fight approaching. Nonetheless, for me, rebelling is something joyous and happily collective, reminiscent of a roaring party. It is big fun to oppose Capitalism, and besides that, I increasingly start to understand, that it can also be a fulfilling artistic choice of life. For them, rebelling still looks like a desperate fight against seemingly all-mighty powers keeping their lives in check: family pressure, career conformism, the danger of losing paid work, running into private debt. My rebelling is indeed just a little dot of red colour which will be washed away by the warm spring rain on Ainu Mosir setting in now. Their rebelling can end Capitalism and no water-cannon



will be able to do away with their combined power.

I do not want any authority or prestige, I do not pretend for artistic originality or for having something important to say. All this is stuff of the old society we will leave behind. My voice is one of many. The making of my ideas is closely linked with the collectives supporting me and empowering me politically: that is You and your Russian summer guests.

Nevertheless, what I want to say to you is none the less passionate. I feel that the possibility of happiness for us and our children depends on our discussion today, on our faculty to listen, understand and build friendships for collective action against Capital rule. This is a tricky task. Friendship must remain an aim in itself. Nobody should use friendship for any aim. Friendship is not an instrument, a weapon, a cover. Friendship is just friendship – the most beautiful thing I have got to know in life. Friendship should not be functional, develop a strategy or realise an action plan. Art just for the sake of art, science for the sake of science and work for the sake of profit is bourgeois ideology, tiresome remnants of the past haunting us today. Bourgeois art, science, business is always bound towards social division, their political economy separates exploiters and exploit-

ed, its shiny façade and gruesome working realities.

To the contrary, friendship just for the sake of friendship is the very sense of the new society we are creating here and now. To friendship, we cannot admit any division of content nor façade, of appearance and reality, no exploitation whatsoever! And yet, we have to mount a fight on the shoulders of friendship. We have terrible trials ahead of us if we take ourselves seriously. We will run into senseless sacrifices and an enemy ready to kill every day to come: in Iraq and Afghanistan, openly on Ainu Mosir for the time being with subcutaneous repression and structural violence. When I stood on the deportation boat and tried – hopefully with success – not to make anybody notice the tears dropping down my cheeks, I noticed, how bourgeois media picked out always the same speakers for interviewing. Their logic is opposed to empowering collective action, opposed to an egalitarian social tissue and genuine collective responsibility. If we engage in their aim fully, we are lost. I feel very strongly, that we have to do away once and for all with the bourgeois media stereotypes, all this picking of leaders and spokesmen (spokeswomen would be little better). We do not engage in action to get a media response, we act to end Capitalism. This is quite a differ-



ence. If I am not mistaken, the terrible downfall of the global Soviet anti-capitalist experience in the 20th century is to a great deal due to making leaders and reverence to spokesmen out of living political collectives. There is strong indication that this deficiency developed out of a defensive attitude of Social Revolution in Civil War. Critique of our comrades - anarchists and communists of 1917 - is tricky because in the first place, we can learn so much from them. Bourgeois historians are very busy to conceal these lessons on waging a global fight against Capitalism and winning it partly. They mute our senses for historical quests with a never-ending, suspicious zeal of criticism against Social Revolution. Let us be modest and not imitate this zeal and its superficiality. Constructive criticism on our comrades' errors is obligatory, no question. And at the same time we will be happy people if we achieve even a tiny remake of 1917 in our lifetime. As the Russians say: human beings are capable of being happy just as a bird is capable of flying. Strangely enough, under Capitalism we undertake little more than a clutch of chickens in this direction. Nevertheless, there is little doubt in my mind that every one of us is capable of taking off.

I feel that time has come to take all notions of social hierarchy out of our dealings. We cannot win

without genuinely facilitating the talent and voice of everyone in our movement to an equal extent. We need to assign time and resources to encourage those in our midst who have been silent for too long to speak up now. The attitude of experts talking to activists as rank-and-file is poison to our movement. Expertism, hierarchy, the business of men making themselves important, making women wash the dishes, is nothing but dead work. It imitates activity and living work where there is in reality a standstill, a petrified relation of exploitation.

good but not enough

However, a simple decision against hierarchies is by far not enough. Hierarchies are tricky: a slight difference in the quality of information we possess and the timing of sharing it, the way we talk to a newcomer (though she has a life history of her own with distinct experience of work and rebellion we urgently need for winning the common struggle) and the way in which men often take common space in conversation and public discussion pushing women aside: all this is subconscious hierarchy and a block to a successful social revolution. No matter how subtly we use it, hierarchy is the soft drug turning us into junkies, making our resistance a loyal and pathetic anecdote under Capitalist rule.



In the half-year preparing Rostock anti-G8 action, I became increasingly frustrated with the intense culture of informal hierarchy celebrated by the Anarchist movement of Germany. Squaring the circle, they installed rituals of asserting hierarchy with anti-hierarchical talk. Practically, they succeeded in claiming supremacy with just this talk: supremacy over one another (very ridiculous if you look at it closely), supremacy over social movements (one reason why we failed to combine with local working class struggles, trade unions, neighbours). And sadly enough, this informally suppressive claim for leadership in controlling funds, resources, knowledge, ideological orientation and hip talk was asserted also against international guests. I feel deeply sorry for this development, the more so because myself, I became part of it, understanding the destructive dynamics too late. I myself have co-responsibility for failing to develop the full potential of the Rostock revolt in 2007.

history might teach us nothing

Both Germany and Japan have a terrible historical burden. Nearly everyone of us carries this burden in her and his personal memories and subtle nuances of socialisation. My own grandfather was an SS-guard at Buch-

enwald concentration camp.

There is no way to conceal that the way I smile, the language I dream in and the words I express love with are terribly close to his smiles, dreams and kisses. For the time being, I have not been given the chance to get to know Japanese society as intimately as I wanted to. But it may be possible, that your grandfathers, working in Harbin and on the Burmese front have actually burdened your thoughts and lives with a similar terror as ours. We do not avoid tears by shutting our eyes. We have to face the horror with our senses open.

In 1941, the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis co-ordinated capital interest and war globally. If any of their obnoxious dreams were to be realised by G8 today, our position would be much more difficult than 67 years ago. This time, there is no Soviet Union, no Communist guerrilla movement in China and no liberal opposition in the US and UK to oppose a global nightmare. What on earth remained of them all?

Rejecting banal historical analogy, we face nonetheless a serious dilemma. The current build-up of the military-industrial complex is unparalleled in scale and repressive possibilities. However, this must not lead us to celebrating our own lack of power. I deeply resented the thousands of protesters in



Rostock who put their hands up when police approached them. And mind, in spite of this fatal gesture of giving up a fight which had only just begun, German police (especially the 23rd Berlin counterinsurgency shock unit) sprayed nerve gas into the very eyes of protesters surrendering with their hands up.

Successful protest is not a miracle, it is the result of rhythmically and melodically convincing collective work and a consciously democratised political economy of preparation. There has been a lot of German talk on the "choreography of protest (Choreographie der Proteste)", "module action elements (Aktions-Module)" and "inter-spectrum alliances (spektrenübergreifende Bündnisse)" preparing Rostock 2007. Too late, I understood that this is talk by self-declared leaders who want to cultivate a garden of protest preparing carefully to yield in personal prestige on the days of the summit. In their eyes, my friends and I, living and working together in Rostock convergence centre were nothing more than tomatoes growing wildly. O.K., they had reason to call me a green tomato ("Du Grüne Tomate"), unripe for the job of representing the left. But I never aimed at representing anyone. In the end, what is their own ripeness and masculinity in politics actually about? On the 2nd of June 2007, Thomas Seibert, Christoph Klein and Ulrich

Brand, our cherished leaders and intellectuals of the autonomous left, willingly became the missing link in G8 repression. They turned their fabulous weapons of criticism, trained in decades of theoretical work with Marx, Kropotkin and Gramsci, against our movement and delivered fabulously pro-Capitalist rule statements on the legitimacy of a G8 monopoly on violence. For once in a life-time bourgeois media paid attention to them for some 20 seconds of fame and they were clever enough to use this window of opportunity to the utmost limits of self-effacement. With their pro G8-violence statements transmitted, the corresponding repression machine of anti-riot police officers, courts and jails tuned into their song. They were all tight together for getting their seconds of mainstream importance that day... and very dear friends of mine got years of jail from this infamous coalition.

I never liked the words of Trotsky claiming that for revolutionary purposes you have to teach people how to hate. However, after Rostock 2007, I have thought a lot about how to learn to hate our pathetic leader figures treating us instrumentally. It appears to me that it is crucial to understand and prevent in time. Hating is always too late and practically of no use. Hating is backward. Understanding and fighting more intelligently



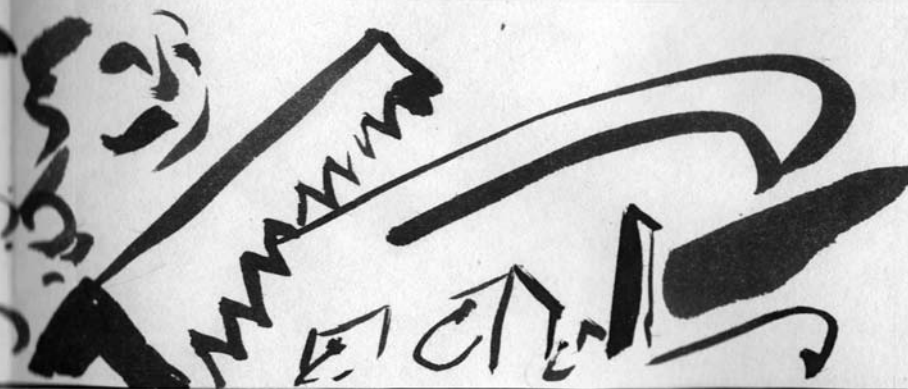
is bound for a better future. If we come too late with our political assessment, as I did in 2007, the only thing we can do is to go on working politically with greater care and modesty, including the very traitors in our next collective steps (we need everyone to be everywhere). But by no means should we forget what they tried to do with us! In the days before the blockades, ATTAC-Germany functionaries, such as Thomas Seibert, Peter Wahl, Christine Leidinger and Pedram Shahyar, did everything in their power to divert and destroy our build-up against G8: they became intimate with police contact officers more than they had ever been intimate with us, they strategically withdrew funding for the convergence initiative "block G8". They even set up an alternative, police-friendly pseudo-blockade to divert support. The movement chose to ignore them and thus made their surrender to police, as ridiculous as the political understanding they wanted to promote for the benefit of their middle-class NGO. It was only after 15,000 activists had risked their health and freedom in fighting and three comrades had almost lost their eyesight from water-cannons, that these self-declared lefties and NGO professionals felt the need to make another U-turn. This new manoeuvre was again just in time to make them stay important, claim agency and deal out their usual

instructions for our movement. But note, ATTAC-Germany and other NGOs changed attitude only after our blockades had been successful. This was a bit late. Thousand of us had been repressed in Guantanamo-like jail facilities around Rostock with the notorious US army logistic company

Sodex-ho nearby.

At that point of development, the all-important figures of the anti-hierarchical left, who were curiously enough not suffering imprisonment, met in a posh pub in Rostock city. To relax they consumed beverages and food at a price which would have allowed another comrade from Latin America to join our protest. They then agreed suddenly, that the initiative "block G8" will not be plunged into debt, but will receive important money subsidies from ATTAC-Germany, contrary to previous statements.

Maybe it is of little use to lose more words on these operations. For the tremendous success of Rostock, all these machinations were utterly insignificant. Heiligendamm was turned into a ground-breaking success, into a symbolically closed cage for declining world-leaders because a myriad of autonomous affinity groups had decided to prepare for this (months in advance) and go for it conscious of all the risks

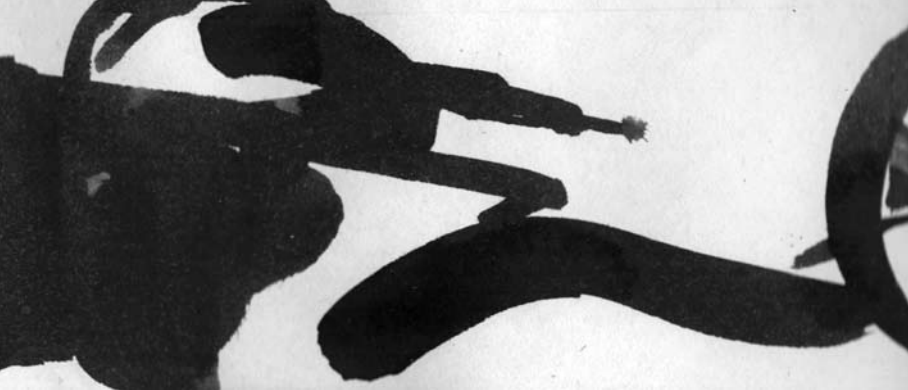


we know about.

One key initiative linking them was the info-point system. I want to give you some personal impressions of this scheme, because I got the subjective impression that it was a crucial element for the success of Rostock-Heiligendamm 2007. This system needs much more systematic examination and evaluation than you can get from me. I only roughly understood that it was highly effective in facilitating and catalysing a co-ordinated offensive against the summit during half a month of open confrontation. I remember talking about info-points with my friend Bale (name changed). I saw him whenever he returned to Rostock Convergence centre in April and May from endless bike-rides through the coastal region surrounding Heiligendamm. At that time, I had not really understood what the info-point meant – he had. Every little group of trees, every field with crops high enough for hiding had been registered and located in a planning grid which was later dealt out to every activist arriving. The grid was cast over very convenient maps featuring action relevant geometrical data printed nicely on A3-sheets of ecologically recycled paper. They comprised all relevant information in short-hand, including a series of specific contact telephone numbers. For every meeting of my affinity group, these maps became the

basis of understanding the most complex situation at a given time on urban and rural battle grounds. Hardly anyone in my affinity group spoke German. But like Esperanto, the language of Social Revolution and its geography is universal. Info-points spoke this language, hardly any translation was needed. Info-points were as important as camp sites in the landscaping of our offensive.

Info-points were a safe-haven. They were located on private plots of land at strategic merging points. Thanks to tedious preparation work, police could not enter them without court permit. Activists had received the permission of the formal owner (according to bourgeois law) to be there and police had not. Info-points contained kitchen, rest and tent facilities. They collected data, and distributed it with a breath-taking effectiveness. They created the space for socialising needed to converge for action. They provided retreat spaces for women only, tents for first aid and post-trauma work. Info-points took an active part in observing the movements of repressive forces on the ground, for example, the transport chains and quantity of prisoners transported. No police van passed an info-point without its registration number and inside being scanned and reported by the activists on watch. Data was then proc-



essed and correlated with other sources in a co-ordinated way. But most important was the monitoring of our own forces. Police cannot understand us when we move on the ground: thousands of self-confident and sovereign individuals taking decisions by their own judgement. Repressive forces are used to receiving orders, surrendering their proper understanding and responsibility. But, quite to the contrary, we ourselves have to evolve supreme knowledge and consciousness of our own movements, our very potentials and weaknesses. There can be no experts on our movement except for us ourselves. Whoever is slightly acquainted with the history of Social Revolution will easily discern that info-points took up the role of Jacobin clubs in 1791 Paris, Republican Clubs in 1968 Berlin, factory cells in 1917 Russia, and the work of political commissars in the 1936 Spanish Revolution. For me, the camps around Heiligendamm had - among many strong dynamics - a certain tendency to ghetto our movement in, isolate our very movements from the working classes living and working around them. Camping romantics somehow made us self-complacent of our mere presence and ignorant of our most important tasks (e.g. keeping the initiative on our side and prisoner support). Nothing of this criticism applies to the info-points, rather to the con-

trary. Let me give you a personal example. Our comrade Tim ran the info-point at Rostock convergence centre almost 24 hours a day. Tim is likely to remain in my memory as the most effective and devoted facilitator of the offensive in summer 2007. He is really a strikingly modest young chap. You would hardly notice him in a meeting. Training to paint, I have a passion to observe. So, secretly, I spent as much time as possible observing Tim at work. I felt something like closeness to the very heartbeat of a collective rebellion while watching him work on giant maps to update activist positions, and answering the same question to newcomers over and over again with the most patient attention and gentleness.

All I have recalled here in a brief sketch are just memories of stationary info-points. But, to make things still more interesting, there is also the phenomenon of mobile info-points to be studied and understood. What a pity that we have only 110 days and 109 nights left to grasp this experience and translate it into the Ainu language!

And yet, no matter how well we manage to co-ordinate movement inside our movement, we do not fight for ourselves. For the time being, taking an active part in the anti-Capitalist offensive is still the fruit of extremely lucky coincidence,



of comprehension and extraordinary privilege to sail free of the Capitalist hunt for our time, dreams and sensuality. Most working class people have little chance to enjoy such privilege for the time being. Yet, without becoming the heart of working class struggle, Social revolution makes little sense.

a miracle forthcoming?

There was no Cuban miracle on New Year, 1959. The Cuban working class was not won over by the guerrilla warfare success. Quite to the contrary, lately I have found unpublished documents ^{d44} in Havana archives suggesting, that the unconventional guerrilla strategy, the astonishingly successful rebel land reform and the taking of working-class quarters as in Santa Clara, Cienfuegos and Havana from within and from outside was conceived by working class collectives long before self-declared leaders like Fidel, Che or Camillo had even set foot on Cuban soil and assumed any say in the process of Social Revolution on the Cuban archipelago. In many respects Cuba is similar to Japan: a Yankee colony since the 19th century, corrupted by dollar prostitution and fabulous wealth for a happy few top collaborators. Travelling through Cuba today, you see the pathetic ruins of Capitalist US-glamour: motorways and petrol stations,

luxury hotels and export investments from the 1950s. Maybe in some decades, we will be able to look on similar investment ruins on the archipelago of Japan. Capitalism is junk for our senses. Its nauseating flood of goods and services keep us busy for a lifetime, but most of us dissatisfied, overworked and frustrated to death. How lucky we are, that after New Year 1994 in Chiapas and after the offensive of Seattle, we have learnt to hear another world breathing!

I had prepared

to spend many weeks in Ainu Mosir, mainly listening, trying to understand. I had planned to attend meetings of trade unions, those corrupted and those fighting back; to live and work with farmers in the countryside near the summit location; to get a feeling of the hardship of daily life in the periphery of a gluttonous capitalist economy. I was decided to go on night fishing tours with boats of small fishermen, to understand their fight against the big food industry corporations ruining their resources and income. I wanted to listen to testimony from women relief centres on male violence in Ainu Mosir. I was passionate to share the island's protest against the dismantlement of the Japanese peace constitution and to live with squatters of public parks. I looked forward



to becoming a guest in the poor flats of Iranian migrant workers. My own background of social experience is very limited. I am a relic of dying bourgeois class privilege. I have had a privileged education of anti-authoritarian and pacifist tendency. I have had access to an amount of goods and services which only capitalism can secure for a happy few... to the detriment of the working class majority on our planet. I am not religious. My political commitment seems to have no trace of a feeling of guilt. Indeed, feeling guilty and searching for self-penalising compensation seem really quite inadequate. The material processes of daily social exploitation and ecological devastation powered by Capitalism is so brutal and all-encompassing that we cannot operate against it on an individualist, moralising basis. We do not need moralising, we need practical solidarity. We do not need correct positions, but a dynamic search for uniting with working class interest in smashing exploitation. Actually, I think, we do not even need hallmarks - except for identifying and excluding fascists and false allies from our convergence process. What we need is the collective step from talk to action, from symbolical opposition to a universal social offensive, from event hopping to living the Social revolution here and now with a degree of sustained responsibility Capitalist rule cannot match. "

an end to letter writing

A storm was building up on the icy pacific waters. I went up to the bridge. Would the captain grant me two minutes on the internet? Yes, he would. To my surprise, I even got two minutes on his phone to make sure my Japanese friends had received the message. I would have loved to give them more. I could not.

Just on the day of our unexpected break-through across police lines and barbed wire barriers in Rostock-Heiligendamm, a Swiss comrade had curiously insisted "You have to understand, that there are moments in which we simply cannot regain the initiative." As I got ready to understand this absurdity finally, sea-sickness took over centre stage. Through the valleys between the waves we spotted a Japanese warship, then another. "We never got such a farewell. They actually patrol in circles around us," said the Captain with a somewhat forlorn air of amusement.

Despite all our further efforts, Jura and I came no closer to anti-G8 resistance that year. Promised funding from Japan and Germany failed. Everything we did after deportation from Japan, meetings and further preparation throughout Russia, a nice caravan start in Rostock, a giant political ceiling mosaic



with 14,000 hand-glazed tiles, it all got us curiously deeper into private debt and nothing closer to Ainu Mosir. Funding and mobilisation of people not yet barred from Russia and Japan failed partly because of our stubborn ignorance for the importance of money. But equally, it failed as a clear result of more or less open intervention by political police on sponsors and co-organisers in both countries. German political police (Staatschutz) even remembered the forlorn villages in the German mountains where I spent some politically outrageously insignificant years at school. Their questioning and insisting must have been so absurd, that civil servants decided to inform me off record. If you need a sound pretext to feel paranoid, make some friends on the trans-Siberian railway or just put out a red flag on an anti-G8 action day. You can lean back then, the rest will happen at the expense of tax payers. The Japanese political policing machine alone spent publicly more than a quarter billion US dollars on repression of our mobilisation. So, taking official figures at face value, they net doubled the counter-insurgency budget of Rostock 2007.

Simultaneously to Japan's deportation mount-up, all official accommodation already reserved for our Russian guests was cancelled under police pressure – a net reason to refuse any

visa request. Russian administration, too, was comically reluctant to let me in at all after the Japanese warships had pushed us out of their zone of operation. For more than a week, we lay in the rolling waters between Ainu Mosir and Sahalin. In the end, our drinking water supplies were used up to the last drop. We had to land somewhere. So, the Russian political police, FSB, used the next occasion to deport me from Russia as well.

-And what about my invitation issued by your Ministry of Education and Science for a whole year to come?

-The orders we carry out come from a much more senior authority.

-What is their wording then? The officer in charge looked into the distant. I saw on her face how she worked sincerely to improve the poor wording she had just received from the capital in a call during the middle of the night. Finally, she uttered politely:

-'Your visit to the Russian Federation is not currently desirable.'

The day was breaking over the Baltic EU-border at Pytalovo. No taking apart of our train was necessary. Our wagon continued smoothly to go where I did not want to go, leaving so many and so dear friends behind.



from Genova 2001

... to Sapporo 2008

a voyage across the 3rd world
of Europe and Asia,
G8 rule and subversion

Siberian Diary is the condensed personal account of several years of mobilisation against G8 along the trans-Siberian railway line to Japan.

Starting in post-orange Ukraine, the essay collects social impressions of life under corporate take-over.^{d3} We delight in the anti-authoritarian movement for block-free Belarus.^{d10} Slim portraits then sketch the work and commitment of contemporary collectives in Leningrad^{d15}, Moscow^{d17}, the Ural, Omsk^{d27} and Novosibirsk. Our trail takes us to exploring the full length of the central Siberian river Enisej right up into Chinese culture^{d32}. Accounts of social activism and interactive travelling in the Pacific far-east^{d33} close the testimony with a passionate appeal^{d37} for mutual learning and personal support to *link East and West* experience for the years to come. This controversial collage has been compiled to document our debate for *radical democracy* in social action possibly making collective revolutionary production a reality of our future.



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